

EXECUTIVE ORDER #13158 ON
MARINE PROTECTED AREAS
HIGHLIGHTS

On May 26, 2000, President Clinton signed Executive Order #13158 on Marine Protected Areas. This historic milestone in ocean conservation directs the federal government to significantly *strengthen and expand the national system of MPAs*, working closely with state, territorial, local, and tribal trustees and other stakeholders. NOAA played a crucial role in the development of this Executive Order (E.O.) and will have a prominent leadership role in its implementation. Following are the key aspects of this initiative that involve NOAA programs directly.

E.O. #13158 directs Federal agencies to take three primary actions related to MPAs:

- Strengthen and expand *existing MPA sites and add new protected areas* where needed using existing authorities and programs to fulfill science-based priorities.
- Work collaboratively with public and private interests, including regional Fisheries Management Councils, to develop a *science-based framework* for the national system of MPAs, including setting minimum areas for protection in major US marine ecosystems and prioritizing new sites for potential designation as MPAs.
- *Avoid causing harm* to the resources protected by MPAs in the course of federally approved, funded or conducted actions.

Toward that end, NOAA has been directed to play a lead role in developing three key components of this work:

- NOAA will create and manage the *Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee* comprising non-federal scientists and resource managers who will give advice and recommendations to NOAA and the Department of the Interior (DOI) on developing a science-based framework for a national system of MPAs.
- NOAA will create and manage, in collaboration with DOI, a WWW site (mpa.gov) providing information on MPAs, on the government's implementation of the Executive Order, and on the location, scope and purposes of all MPAs in the U.S.
- NOAA will establish and manage the national *Marine Protected Areas Center* that will work collaborative with the DOI, other federal, state and territorial agencies, and the science community to develop and disseminate the information, tools and strategies needed to design and effectively manage the national system of MPAs.

What the Executive Order does not do:

Given the sensitivity of this issue among certain stakeholders, it is perhaps equally important to specify what issues are not addressed by the E.O. Chief among these are:

- The E.O. applies to all types of marine protected areas and is not focused exclusively on *no take fisheries reserves*.
- The E.O. does not set *specific numeric or geographic targets* for habitat protection in particular areas or nationwide.
- The E.O. does not require the *restructuring of any federal MPA programs*, either within or among agencies, nor does it create any *new overarching management authorities*.
- The E.O., while clearly setting ambitious goals for strengthening and expanding the national system of MPAs, does not *supplant existing authorities or requirements for public involvement in the* identification and creation of new.

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